

U.S. Department of Education
2021 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Kimberly Osterhues
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name River Crest Elementary School
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 535 County Road F
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Hudson State WI Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 54016-8008

County St. Croix County

Telephone (715) 377-3890 Fax (715) 377-3891

Web site/URL
<https://hudsonraiders.org/schools/river-crest-elementary/> E-mail osterhka@hudsonraiders.org

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent* Dr. Nick Ouellette E-mail ouelletten@hudsonraiders.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Hudson School District Tel. (715) 377-3700

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board
President/Chairperson Mr. James Johnson
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, leave blank.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The electronic signature on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. All nominated public schools must meet the state’s performance targets in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate), for the all students group, including having participation rates of at least 95 percent using the most recent accountability results available for nomination.
2. To meet final eligibility, all nominated public schools must be certified by states prior to September 2021 in order to meet all eligibility requirements. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
3. The school configuration must include one or more of grades K-12. Schools located on the same campus (physical location and mailing address) must apply as an entire school (i.e. K-8; 6-12; K-12 school). Two (or more) schools located on separate campuses, must apply individually even if they have the same principal. A single school located on multiple campuses with one principal must apply as an entire school.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2015 and grades participating in statewide assessments must have been part of the school for at least the three years prior to September 2019.
5. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 or 2020.
6. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. If irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state, the U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award.
7. The nominated school has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district, as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the current school year (2020-2021) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools.)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 6 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 1 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 8 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools. Only include demographic data for the nominated school, not the district.)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located. If unsure, refer to NCES database for correct category: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/> (Find your school and check “Locale”)

- ☐ Urban (city or town)
☐ Suburban
☒ Rural

3. Number of students as of October 1, 2020 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent at the school. Include all students enrolled, in-person, participating in a hybrid model, or online only. If online schooling or other COVID-19 school issues make this difficult to obtain, provide the most accurate and up-to-date information available:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	26	26	52
1	28	27	55
2	39	23	62
3	31	25	56
4	37	35	72
5	24	37	61
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	185	173	358

*Schools that house PreK programs should count preschool students **only** if the school administration is responsible for the program.

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school (if unknown, estimate):
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 1.7 % Asian
 - 1.4 % Black or African American
 - 6.4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 83.5 % White
 - 7 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2019 - 2020 school year: 4%

If the mobility rate is above 15%, please explain:

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	1
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2019 until the end of the 2019-2020 school year	13
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	14
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2019	370
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.04
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	4

6. Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Spanish, Korean, Creoles and Pidgins (French-Based)

English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 4 %
16 Total number ELL

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 17 %

Total number students who qualify: 60

8. Students receiving special education services: 16 %

58 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. All students receiving special education services should be reflected in the table below. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>3</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>10</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>7</u> Developmental Delay	<u>6</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>8</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>23</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Intellectual Disability	<u>1</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 8

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to the nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below. If your current staffing structure has shifted due to COVID-19 impacts and you are uncertain or unable to determine FTEs, provide an estimate.

	Number of Staff
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers, including those teaching high school specialty subjects, e.g., third grade teacher, history teacher, algebra teacher.	18
Resource teachers/specialists/coaches e.g., reading specialist, science coach, special education teacher, technology specialist, art teacher etc.	12
Paraprofessionals under the supervision of a professional supporting single, group, or classroom students.	6
Student support personnel e.g., school counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	1

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2019-2020	2018-2019	2017-2018	2016-2017	2015-2016
Daily student attendance	95%	96%	96%	97%	99%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2020.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

River Crest Elementary School will instill the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for developing successful and responsible members of a diverse society. Together we will provide the opportunities for maximum learning within a safe, supportive, and challenging environment.

16. Briefly describe how your school has been operating during the current 2020-2021 school year (e.g., open as usual, online only, a hybrid model, etc.)? If different grade levels in your building operate in different ways, include this. If the school began with one model and switched to another partially through the year, include this as well.

Our school has been open for in person learning for all of the 2020-2021 school year with the option for students to participate synchronously for core instruction and some special curricular areas instruction virtually with their assigned class. Physical Education, Library Media, and Music instruction for virtual (distance) learners has been asynchronous. If a child is quarantined or COVID positive, they transition to the virtual model during the time they cannot attend in person.

17. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

PART III - SUMMARY

River Crest Elementary is an Early Childhood to Fifth Grade school committed to “Inspiring Excellence from the Start.” River Crest is one of six elementary schools in the Hudson School District in Wisconsin. Hudson has a proud tradition of being a school district committed to excellence. Our students, families, staff and community are united in creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment that provides equitable access, so all students fully participate in their academic and personal success. The Hudson School District is located in the scenic St. Croix River Valley of Wisconsin, just fifteen miles east of the Minnesota Twin Cities. Hudson Schools cover approximately 77 square miles, including all or part of the City of Hudson, Village of North Hudson and the Townships of Hudson, St. Joseph, and Troy. River Crest opened in 2008; it was designed and built with a focus on environmental sustainability and is a LEED Gold certified building.

At River Crest Elementary, we know that learning spaces are not held within the classroom walls. River Crest sits on the bluffs above the St. Croix River. We embrace and capitalize on the opportunities this unique setting provides. We have an outdoor learning pavilion for instruction near the prairie for classes, and a one mile walking trail around the school grounds. Playground space includes both traditional play areas and natural play space that our Environmental Kids Club helped design. We have partnered with the St. Croix Valley Prairie Enthusiasts to engage students in researching and observing prairie restoration on our property. We visit the neighboring YMCA-Camp St. Croix using the tunnel, which safely connects our properties.

We know that special events done with intention shape lives and perspective. One of our favorite special events is our day of service: Caring for Others Near and Far. The service we participate in extends beyond a single day, but each year we partner with our PTO and dedicate an entire school day to taking action together to focus on service. Projects have included making toys and blankets for dogs that get adopted through a local rescue, making Bee Bombs, collecting books for a library in Ghana, and making 1,000 sandwiches that were distributed through the Sandwich Project of Minnesota. Another special event that is very meaningful to our school is Veterans Day. Our Veterans Day celebration is focused on respect and gratitude. Students send invitations to active duty and Veteran service members, make cards for Veterans, we hold an assembly with special speakers, and host a reception. This year, because of COVID restrictions, students made cards, wrote letters, and created a video that was sent to Veterans.

River Crest also celebrates reading together as a school community each year. With support from grants and our PTO, we participated in a One School One Book event. Every family received a copy of the book. Our PBIS Team organized a United Through Literature program one year where each month every classroom received a picture book connected to a character trait and then we followed up with activities. In 2021, we shared a common book across the building and with families. Although we could not have guests physically in the school, we streamed parent volunteers reading chapters of the book into classrooms. It was great to connect our students to parents through literature.

We know that our love and passion for students does not start and end with bells. River Crest has a spring Running Club where parents run with students and staff in the morning before the bell to help prepare for our one mile run event. Students have the opportunity to be part of our Environmental Kids Club which meets before school. During the spring of 2020, when our school building was shut down, teachers worked all hours of the day to support students. Staff worked with parents who were juggling the demands of their own work while also helping to support the learning of their children. Teachers dropped materials off at homes, they took calls and connected with families through Google Meets. Teachers and families worked through challenges together and it was evident each day that nothing was going to stop them from helping students through these challenges.

We know parents and community are our partners. Our River Crest students and staff benefit from our highly engaged parents. Parents support learning through their active participation in special events, conferences, Art Adventure, Junior Achievement, and evening activities like Reading Night, Math Night, our Carnival, and Movie Night. The River Crest PTO is an essential partner and has supported each and

every part of what makes our school special with their leadership, time, and financial support. Our YMCA-Camp St. Croix partners have helped bring environmental learning and experiences alive for our school community.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

River Crest's core curriculum, instructional approaches, and assessments are built upon Wisconsin's Model Academic Standards, Social and Emotional Learning Competencies, and Stronge Teacher and Specialist Standards for Educator Effectiveness. English language arts (ELA), math, social studies (SS), and science teacher and district leadership teams determined priority standards with differentiated knowledge, skills, and reasonings to drive all instruction. Student progress is monitored and shared with families through standards-based report cards.

With the closing of school in March 2020, the school district quickly adapted to online learning through teacher technology training, collaborative virtual planning, and teaching through screencasts, Google Classroom, and Google Meets. Initially, each classroom teacher contacted their families to check in, offer support, and clarify virtual learning. Subsequently, all staff, including specialists and paraprofessionals, continued to reach out to families to keep communication open and seize opportunities for connections. The principal and teachers personally connected with families through phone calls and home visits. The district provided hotspots and Chromebooks to families who requested access through a survey. Throughout the closure, the Instructional Technology department (IT) provided family technology training and created an online help desk to respond immediately to parent requests for ongoing support.

Teachers modified instructional platforms by creating video lessons for the core content areas which families could view based on the family's schedule and WiFi access. Teachers also created office hours (morning, afternoon, and evening) to provide individualized support for students and families. Teams of teachers collaborated on and shared lessons to provide consistency for all students, continuing to utilize district core curriculum resources. Specialist area teachers provided choice boards (learning activities based on content standards) for independent learning.

Beginning Fall, 2020, families had the choice to attend school in person or virtually. We adapted from a completely asynchronous online learning in the spring to a synchronous style of teaching and learning upon our return in September. In order to maintain our history of strong classroom communities, all of our teachers teach students both within the classroom and online. Individual Distance Learners (IDL) join a Google Meet and get real-time instruction from their teacher. IDL students receive the same curriculum and instruction as those students in the classroom, providing for a smooth transition back to the classroom or out for IDL when needed for COVID reasons, keeping our classroom communities strong and connected.

All of our teachers have multiple opportunities for professional learning in supporting students through high-quality instruction and planning. High impact instructional strategies (Workshop Model, Gradual Release, flexible small groups measurable learning targets) are studied, modeled, supported, and trained in current staff and new teachers through ongoing professional learning opportunities district training, instructional coaching, and Professional Learning Communities (PLC) collaboration. In addition to this ongoing support, with the school closure in Spring, there was an increase in professional choice-based learning in technology, including, screencasts, Google Classroom, Google Meets, with frequent updates on the many changes in technology. We now have IT support housed in our building. All grade level teams and specialist teams have time built into their schedule for weekly PLCs to look at assessment data, plan and differentiate instruction, and prepare materials for both in person and at home learners. This team collaboration, shared planning, data analysis, and instruction ensures a continuity of delivery for all students.

Quality research based assessment practices (formative and summative) have been continually trained and supported in PLCs as a way to modify and target instruction. In this blended model of instruction, there is an explicit use of learning targets to focus instruction for both in person and online learners. The learning targets and standards are assessed in a variety of ways (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Teachers fluently and flexibly use running records, the Benchmark Assessment System, NWEA Map assessment, common interim and formative assessments to get to know their students and report progress to parents. This information shapes instruction and helps teachers provide immediate and prescriptive feedback to students.

At River Crest, we have building-wide systems to meet individual student needs using data as our guide. Grade level PLCs meet to analyze student data from common interim assessments. Three times during the school year, teachers, specialists, guidance counselor, coach, and principal meet to reflect on the growth and needs of individual students and coordinate efforts to support the learning and growth of each student. Interventions are implemented as discussed and student progress is monitored, if a student continues to show need for additional support, parents, teachers, guidance counselor, and principal meet in a Student Support Team to further personalize support for the student.

1a. For secondary schools (middle and/or high school grades):

1b. For schools that offer preschool for three- and/or four-year old students:

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Students at River Crest Elementary attend classes taught by specialists in the areas of physical education, music, art, media, and guidance. The specialist teachers at River Crest collaborate to help support connections to overall school initiatives, goals, and growth of students. All specialist classes utilize standards-based reporting in their communication of student progress to parents.

Students participate in physical education for 35 minutes, 3 times each week. Student instruction focuses on three key areas; building student understanding of the importance of physical activity, fitness, and a healthy lifestyle to live healthy lives; learning and demonstrating characteristics such as teamwork, sportsmanship and positive attitude; and knowing concepts and practicing skills through a variety of activities to live active lives. Students have some favorite units of study each year including roller skating, track and field, and (when the weather cooperates) snow-shoeing. Each spring, students participate in a 1 mile run utilizing the paved one mile trail that encircles the River Crest property. Parents come to cheer students on and sometimes they also run with their children!

Art classes focus on developing each student's critical thinking skills with infusing an appreciation of design and creative expression. Students master the Elements of Art and are introduced to the Principles of Design through creative projects that explore art history, cultures of the world, and a variety of artistic media. Onsite students have art 35 minutes twice per week, students who are learning from home stream the live class for 15 minutes and then work on the art project at home for the remaining 20 minutes of the class period. Art supplies are sent home each week so that students at home can complete either the same project that students on site are completing or a similar project that supports the learning targets for the lesson.

All students participate in music instruction for 35 minutes twice per week, and students in fourth and fifth grade also have the option to join orchestra. In music class, instruction includes singing and playing instruments, reading and notating music, analyzing and describing music, composing and improvising, evaluating, and understanding music in relation to history and culture. The music experience at River Crest engages students in the power of expression of feelings through music in performance. Concerts often move audiences to tears as students sing from their hearts music which not only supports instructional learning targets specific to music but also supports character development and empathy.

In library media, our media specialist provides students with instruction in print and digital media skills including book selection, internet safety, digital citizenship, and coding in classes that are held 3 times every two weeks for 35 minutes. The Library/Media Center is a hub of energy at River Crest. It is where our fifth grade students stream the River Crest Reporter everyday, where students go for Battle of the Books practice, book reviews to be shared with the building, book check out, coordination of all school reading events, and where many parent meetings take place.

River Crest students attend Developmental Guidance Lessons taught by our guidance counselor once every

two weeks for 35 minutes. Guidance lessons are part of the comprehensive school counseling program in the Hudson School District that supports students in the areas of academic, social emotional learning and career planning.

3. Academic Supports:

River Crest believes that academic, behavioral, and emotional supports are rooted in the classroom where teachers tailor instruction, interventions, and assessments to meet the needs of all students in our building community. Teachers conduct targeted small group instruction to support the varied needs of students in each classroom. Curriculum is selected to support this approach and the scope and sequence of lessons include expectations for flexible instruction times and days to support the growth and learning of each child. Through COVID closure we have maintained a focus on additional support coordinated by the classroom teachers.

Student progress is monitored and teachers collaborate and connect strategies and supports for students through robust discussions and considerations of all factors that contribute to student progress including student skill and proficiency, as well as their engagement and the instructional approaches and curriculum we are utilizing. During school closure in the spring of 2020, we conducted these meetings virtually but continued to meet and collaborate.

Students who are performing below grade level are identified through common assessments and teacher teams collaborate to identify primary factors contributing to the under achievement and tailor an approach to change the trajectory of their progress. Plans can include social emotional support, academic intervention, changes to an Individualized Education Plan, increased communication and meetings with school personnel and parents, and progress monitoring.

There is a continuum of support teams that work to focus on achievement of all students. Classroom grade level teachers meet weekly to collaborate, data focused meetings with our instructional coach, principal, counselor, and intervention teachers occur 3 times per year, a targeted support leadership team meets monthly to monitor progress of students in intervention, and if students are not responding to interventions as expected or have multiple areas of need we hold student specific support team meetings with the parents to fine tune plans. Our goal is to create a web of support for each child.

Increasing the achievement of students with a disability has been an area of focus for us. To help us meet the needs of our students we have taken steps to increase in-class support rather than pull out support, training all staff in social-emotional and behavior intervention supports, and aligning learning targets and intervention supports to our core curriculum. Our instructional coach participated in Behavior Tools Training and Social-Emotional Training and has used the new learning when coaching paraprofessionals and certified teachers. The common thread to all of our work is connecting strategies, connecting approaches, and teaming to make a difference for our students together with a web of support.

PART V – SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

1. Engaging Students:

At River Crest, students are engaged emotionally, behaviorally, and cognitively through a strong commitment by all staff to build and foster connections among all students. We have had a theme of “Kindness” for multiple years and support students in acting with kindness and celebrating it around them.

To create an environment where all students feel welcome, safe, and supported, staff have trained and implemented strategies from trauma sensitive schools training, Zones of Regulation, Social Emotional Learning, and Love and Logic. We monitor student connections to adults by asking students to identify adults they feel connected with and would go to for help in our building, resulting in each child having at least one strong adult connection. We meet as Professional Learning Communities to identify students who are showing low levels of engagement and create plans to support them. We have utilized strategies such as 2X10, friendship groups, lunch bunches, mentor connections, students supporting younger students, and engaging in problem solving with all stakeholders.

River Crest also supports students engaging with their community and world and takes great pride in our Veteran’s Day activities. The assembly began as an opportunity for students to learn about and show respect. Through hand written notes of gratitude to our Veterans, artwork for our community, an assembly for community Veterans with speeches and songs, and a reception for our guests of honor, we all show our thanks and respect.

Another special event that engages students in a meaningful way is our day of service: Caring for Others Near and Far. We promote service learning throughout the year, but once each year we focus an entire day on service, giving students an opportunity to engage in activities and learn from service organization leaders. Examples of the activities for our students include making 1,000 sandwiches for the Sandwich Project of Minnesota, making Bee Bombs, creating dog toys for Coco’s Heart Dog Rescue, collecting money for the Rosa Vera Fund, the Hope North School in Uganda, and collecting books for Hand in Hand for Literacy to be used for a new library in Ghana.

During school closure Spring 2020 and through the school year of 2020-21, many of our typical strategies have been modified. With the goal of keeping students connected during the shutdown, all staff created a spreadsheet to track personal connections with students. We checked in, asked how they were doing, if they needed help with technology or finding ways to engage with learning, and to show we care. Students who were less engaged in online learning were assigned staff to make additional connections with them. Families who did not respond to calls or emails were visited at their homes by the principal to provide support, let them know we cared, and keep them connected to their school community. Written newsletters were accompanied by video messages so that students and families could still see staff members and continue to feel connected.

2. Engaging Families and Community:

From the start, the River Crest school community understood the importance of connecting with families and its new neighbor YMCA-Camp St. Croix. The two occupy campuses on either side of a busy county road. With financial assistance from both organizations, community foundations, businesses and families, we worked together to build a \$250,000 tunnel to safely connect pedestrian traffic between the campuses. As a result, both River Crest and YMCA-Camp St. Croix enjoy a unique and mutually beneficial relationship. Our River Crest students take walking field trips to camp throughout the year, broadening their environmental education experiences.

Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) sponsors family friendly events each month to facilitate school community connections. The PTO sponsors an annual carnival with hundreds of parent volunteers. It is a labor of love that is rewarded by the smiles on the faces of the children and their families. While the event is a fundraiser, care is taken to ensure all families have access to the event and families who have a financial

need are provided tickets so they can fully participate. The funds help support multiple enrichment activities in our school.

Our classrooms are alive with support from parents, community volunteers and community leaders. Parents are active volunteers in the classrooms and partners in their children's learning. Our school has received support for many of our initiatives with grants from the Ann Marie Foundation as well as The Education Foundation of Hudson Star Grant Program. We have partnered with local Eagle Scouts and Girl Scouts to help us develop our outdoor spaces for learning and play. Community volunteers can be found in our classrooms sharing important financial literacy lessons through Junior Achievement.

COVID created challenges that we creatively worked through to keep families engaged. In previous years, we have had parents attend a family literacy night. This year, we sent a video home and then had an open meeting where parents could connect with the classroom teachers to ask questions and participate in a discussion about the information that was shared. To help bring families and community members into the classrooms for reading activities we have used live meeting links to stream visits with volunteers, we also had volunteers submit videos of themselves reading a chapter from the book we shared for our All School Read. We were grateful that technology allowed us to maintain community visits virtually in our classrooms.

3. Creating Professional Culture:

Collaboration is an integral part of the professional culture at River Crest, and the school closure in March of 2020 did not negate the importance of collaboration among teachers. After the first few weeks of closure, we developed a structured plan, supported by instructional coaches and building administrators, for grade-level teachers and content area teams to meet, discuss, and plan distance learning. The meetings provided an opportunity for teachers to ask questions, voice concerns, and offer feedback about distance learning. On April 13th, the district delivered a full day of virtual professional learning based on teachers' feedback. The teachers chose from a menu of technology topics, viewed the asynchronous learning, and had the opportunity to attend office hours to ask questions. The professional learning topics included Google Meet, FlipGrid, Screencastify, EdPuzzle, Jamboard, ClassLink, Differentiation Tools, Sharing Videos, and Best Practices for Online Learning. The IT department, media specialist, and instructional coach offered daily support for teachers to implement their new learning.

In June, River Crest teachers attended district-wide virtual curriculum meetings focused on planning and preparation for the 2020-2021 school year. The teachers played an integral part in planning for the upcoming school year. Conversations from the committee meetings and results from a district survey indicated a need to learn more about Google Classroom. Teachers had the opportunity to engage in Google Classroom asynchronous professional learning during a professional development day in June, throughout the summer, and during teacher in-service days for the 2020-2021 school year.

In July, the district held "Return to Learn" meetings. A team of administrators, coaches, and K-5 teachers representing all curricular areas and departments met to plan professional learning and identify necessary supports and resources needed for fall instruction. Teachers also had the opportunity to provide feedback and input about the three learning instructional learning models: Onsite, Individual Distance Learning, and Virtual.

The start of the 2020-2021 school year required an "all hands on deck" approach. Teachers were teaching onsite learners as well as synchronous distance learners. To prepare for the new learning environment, teachers received technology training and support. The IT department moved techs to each of the buildings. The instructional coaches and curriculum specialists were assigned schools to answer questions and troubleshoot technology problems for our distance learners, families, and teachers.

4. School Leadership:

River Crest Leadership teams collaborate to make meaningful decisions that shape the landscape of our school. We have core leadership teams that meet throughout the year and we also create ad hoc committees

for special event planning. Our standing leadership teams include PBIS, Academic Achievement, Targeted Support, and Climate/Wellness. The temporary or ad hoc committees plan for and communicate plans for special events or activities including Service Day, Veterans Day, Reading Week, All School Read, and Last Day of School planning. The River Crest PTO is also part of our special event planning committees. All of the committees focus on student academic achievement and social emotional wellness through a common theme of being safe, responsible, and respectful in a kind and collaborative way. On a grade level team, teachers are spread out on different leadership teams and act as a conduit of feedback and information between their grade level team and the leadership team. Teachers also have choice in the creation of passion project teams to share their inspiration with students and staff. The school principal participates in all leadership teams to help coordinate work and facilitate collaborative decision making.

Our leadership teams help to plan and make decisions in how to face the challenges of COVID-19. In the summer before school started again, our Achievement Team and our PBIS team met to discuss the various factors would help us ensure learning continued to move forward for our students while we maximized mitigation strategies to promote the health and well-being of all students, staff, and families. All procedures in the school were reviewed by the leadership teams including how we would move through the hallway, what would happen regarding shared materials, and how we could meet expectations for our curriculum and instructional models while also honoring guides for keeping distance and reducing time spent in close proximity. The decisions were difficult for the leadership teams, but with a clear focus on the health and safety of all so that risk was minimized to the greatest extent possible so that we could keep our doors open, we made those tough decisions together and have been able to keep our doors open each day. We have had to compromise and have lost some of the fidelity of implementation of our curriculum but we trust that each and every person, including parents, are doing their best to keep learning going in a safe and supportive environment for every child.

5. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:

At River Crest Elementary, All Means All. Our students and families represent a range of cultural backgrounds, languages, socio-economic levels, and ability levels. Our staff provides innovative programs to ensure access to curriculum, extra-curricular opportunities, and community events.

Many of the community's youngest learners start at River Crest Elementary in the Early Childhood Special Education program. In addition to serving children with IEPs in this program, we have also designed integrated classrooms in collaboration with St. Croix County Head Start. Young children are provided access to educational opportunities and experiences in a school setting where older children serve as role models in the hallways, on the playgrounds, and even occasionally as "teacher's helpers" in the classroom.

Starting as early as kindergarten, children identified as English language learners are served through the English as a Second Language program. In the last four years, the number of children who enrolled in the school directly from another country has tripled. These children did not speak any English, nor did their families. In response, additional technology was introduced to help students communicate in their first language while still learning English. An interpreter is available to assist teachers and parents. Classes are offered to parents to help them navigate the online registration process, learn about the Google Classroom platform used in the school, and to learn English. Classroom teachers are trained in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol ensuring that our English Language learners receive effective academic instruction in addition to language instruction.

The Gifted & Talented program as well as Special Education programs are available to address the wide array of learning styles and abilities of our students. The Gifted & Talented program supports the extension and enrichment of curriculum for students where and when it is needed. Additionally, the Special Education program provides services to students who require specialized

instruction in order to access general education curriculum. Throughout the year, classroom teachers have the opportunity to co-teach lessons and units of study with either a Gifted & Talented program teacher or a Special Education teacher. This provides us the opportunity to meet the specific needs of identified students while creating the incidental benefit of having two teachers in a classroom.

River Crest Elementary works with the community to make sure all families have their basic needs met. Through partnerships with area non-profit groups, we provide a backpack of food to help families over weekends when children are not accessing school nutrition services. In addition, with our building's Angel fund, we ensure that all families can access school events regardless of their ability to pay.

PART VI - STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In March of 2020, our goal for instruction was to be flexible in providing instructional resources and materials that would guide our kids and their families through their assignments. Instructional coaches, curriculum specialists, and teachers collaboratively created a repository of instructional videos that were shared among team members. We developed guidelines for instructional minutes and teachers established office hours for four hours each school day.

In the fall of 2020, our goal remained the same but our instructional delivery shifted. In addition to on-site learning, families had the opportunity to elect access to Individual Distance Learning (IDL). Individual Distance Learning provides synchronous (real-time) access to scheduled classroom experiences that are live-streamed through Google Classroom. Every family who expressed interest in IDL received a phone call to discuss their specific needs and concerns. Individual distance learning plans were developed collaboratively with administrators, teacher leaders, and families.

To support teachers with IDL learners and synchronous instruction, “Day in the Life” videos were created and shared with teachers and staff. The videos showcased a teacher modeling synchronous instruction in multiple scenarios throughout a school day. Teachers received Google Classroom, webcam, and Tech Tools training to improve their technology knowledge and skills. We refocused our professional learning priorities and instructional coaching to support teachers in IDL delivery.

IDL required us to redesign the way students participated in special classes. The design takes into consideration limiting screen time while maintaining a focus on the essential learning in each subject. Physical education, music, and media IDL are completely asynchronous. Teachers in these subjects created a menu of learning experiences. Students and parents select options from these menus during their scheduled special class or at their convenience. Art is delivered with a blend of synchronous and asynchronous experiences. Instruction will include a 10 to 15 minutes synchronous lesson followed by work time on the project the class is completing or working from a menu similar to music or PE. Developmental guidance lessons are delivered synchronously via Google Meet by the School Counselor. We also adjusted grading and reporting practices for IDL students. If a student is in IDL for more than 50% of a trimester, they will receive an “NA” for the asynchronous specials.

The IDL model also supported students who had to quarantine because of symptoms or exposure related to COVID-19 allowing them to participate in school from home on a temporary basis. The turn-around from in person learning to distance learning happened within a couple days ensuring that students did not miss out on extended days of learning. Teachers who had to quarantine but did not feel sick could also do some teaching from home streaming into the classroom for in person and virtual students with the assistance of an on-site substitute teacher.

The past year has been challenging, but our staff, families, and students at River Crest Elementary have all risen to the challenge in order to maintain high-quality learning that demonstrates our school’s motto of “Inspiring Excellence from the Start.”